

Overview of 2004 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program

To develop an effective fisheries monitoring program, local input on management issues and information needs is vital to ensure that the highest priority subsistence needs are addressed. Each Regional Advisory Council has identified Issues and Information Needs for their respective regions, working with subsistence users, the public, tribes, and state and federal agencies. This input is an important first step in the development of the 2004 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Plan.

To ensure studies are scientifically sound and address subsistence fisheries priorities, the Federal Subsistence Board has developed a process where interested parties submit study proposals that address management issues and information needs identified by Regional Advisory Councils. Fisheries Information Services (FIS) staff and the interagency Technical Review Committee (TRC) evaluate study proposals using four ranking factors: strategic priorities, technical-scientific merit, past performance-administrative expertise, and partnership-capacity building. In preparing reviews and recommendations for study proposals, the FIS Division serves as the Board's technical staff. The TRC provides additional independent scientific review on issues of proposed study design and methods. Membership of the TRC includes five Federal agency members, three Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) representatives, and the Chief of FIS. All TRC members have extensive Alaskan experience relating to fisheries management, subsistence harvest patterns, and field research. The TRC works by consensus, with all members focused on achieving a technically sound, balanced program.

In November 2002, the Office of Subsistence Management invited submission of proposals for the 2004 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program. For 2004, we anticipate \$5 million in funding will be available for Monitoring Program projects. We received 140 study proposals requesting \$12 million in 2004. The TRC advanced 86 of these study proposals for investigation plan development. Of the 86 projects proposals advanced, 56 were stock status and trends projects totaling \$6 million, and 30 were harvest monitoring and traditional ecological knowledge projects totaling \$2 million. These projects include salmon counting weirs, test fisheries, sonar studies, genetic stock identification studies, subsistence harvest surveys, and traditional ecological knowledge studies. The 86 projects represent a balanced mix of studies that address Regional Council concerns, improve and strengthen fisheries management, quantify harvests, employ traditional ecological knowledge, address regulatory actions, strengthen partnerships, and build capacity in local and tribal groups.

Completed investigation plans are due to FIS by May 16, 2003. Once the investigation plans are received, they undergo technical review by FIS staff and the TRC. The TRC will recommend which projects to include in the 2004 Draft Fisheries Resource Monitoring Plan in July 2003. The 2004 Draft Monitoring Plan will then be reviewed by Regional Advisory Councils and the public during September and October 2003. Finally, in December 2003, the Federal Subsistence Board will review and approve a final 2004 Monitoring Plan, weighing scientific, Council, and public input.